Pass Christian Area
1699 1999
Colonization Tricentennial Committee

Pass Christian, Mississippi

The Tricentennial

Volume 2, Issue Twelve November 20, 1999

Gala Function Planned
Passing the Torch!

On Thursday, January 20, year 2000, the last gala social event of the Tricentennial Committee will Pass the Torch to the Pass Christian Lighthouse Society. The "Pass the Torch" event will be held at the West Harrison Community Center on Espy Avenue. Chaired by Ken Austin, anyone interested in serving on one of the sub-committees for the event should call Ken at 452-5820.

This will be the third social gala sponsored by the Tricentennial Committee. Food, beverages, music, and a few short talks will be served.

Lighthouse News

Of note, in a recent Sun Herald release, there were two articles about Lighthouses of interest to Pass Christianians. One was in Kat Bergeron's Column where she described the "Lights of the Millennium," which, besides Biloxi, Ship Island, and Round Island, she reported the reconstruction of ours here in the Pass. Of the four, only one is currently standing.

The other article reported Geri Dendis' *"Ghosts of the Coast"* series of lighthouse paintings. First the Pass Christian, second the Cat Island, and now her third release, the Ship Island light tower. Geri presented the Tricentennial Committee with the original of her painting of the Pass Christian light. It will be turned over to the PC Light House Society to be auctioned off during 2000, at one of its functions.

Pass Christian Historical Marker

On October 19, 1999, the marker was dedicated by the Mayor with local and State officials present and cheered on by a large group of local citizens. The Mayor's statement follows:

"I wish to compliment the members of the Pass Christian Tricentennial Committee for setting in motion the many points of interest and heritage landmarks that is remembered to us in this first of a series of Historical Markers.

"In June of 1699, d'Iberville's men sounded the main channel here in front of Pass Christian and they named it Oyster Pass *(Passe aux Huîtres)* for the many oysters they found here. These waters have been blessed for all these centuries with nine major oyster reefs within an area of 20-square miles that lay here before us.

(Continued on Page Six)

History of Union Quarters — Pass Christian

Following the Civil War, the home at 243 East Beach was used as *Union Quarters.*

The Hoffmans have been tediously restoring the integrity of the home by preserving all of the original historic structure. (Written and Researched by Dan Ellis - Part Three in a series)

Mrs. Louisa Jane Bidwell, wife of David Bidwell of New Orleans

David Bidwell was a nationally famous theatrical manager and theatre owner in New Orleans. Upon his death, in 1888, Mrs. Bidwell assumed ownership and management of the St. Charles Theatre, the Academy of Music and the Phoenix House Theatre in New Orleans.

After her husband's death, she apparently employed management people to oversee her interests while she resided at Pass Christian. Having purchased the home in 1885, the major physical expansion made by her was the addition of a *Garconniere* in 1890.

She lived in the house with her step father, Mr. W.W. Cayton and his wife, giving Louise Bidwell time to pursue her favorite interest. As a dedicated fisherwoman she received recognition for her record "catches."

In 1896, the book, *"Along the Gulf,"* described the home as a large mansion house with broad verandas. The spacious grounds were laid out neatly with graveled walks. The well kept lawns were covered with shrubs and flowers of every variety. A severe storm of a few years previous had destroyed 26 large trees and a winter frost that followed had reduced her orange grove and rose gardens.

In front of the home extending out into the Sound was the longest pier in Pass Christian. While describing the many types of fish she caught, of note, the book related that the U.S. Government had stocked the inland bayous, rivers, and bays with striped bass, thus expanding her fishing grounds in the Portage, Wolf, and Malini bayous and rivers. At that time, the Mexican Gulf Hotel maintained a gulf course and clubhouse on Bayou Portage and Clark Street.

Louisa Jane Bidwell's interest in the Pass probably occurred after several visits while staying at the Mexican Gulf Hotel which opened in 1883, located on Davis Street and Beach Boulevard. It was probably due to her avid love for fishing that caused her on October 19, 1885 to sign her initial agreement to buy the house from its former owner, Mary Caroline Dewees. The agreement was further clarified on October 29, 1885 with the acquisition of five pieces of property for $7500. These included the 153-foot front lot south of Front Street on the Gulf, the two lots from Front Street to Second Street which combined measured 153 feet wide and 510 feet deep. The purchase also included two more lots, which when combined, measured 77 feet wide by approximately 475 feet deep on the north side of Second Street.

During her stay in Pass Christian, there were rumors that Mrs. Bidwell was intimate with Captain John T. McDonald. She showed him her fondness by giving him her large sailing and fishing schooner known as the *"Queen of the Fleet."* McDonald operated it as a fishing party boat -- often sailing the motorless vessel during moonlight tours.

The fishing vessel was noted for its nearly spotless racing record throughout the 1890s and early 1900s until being replaced by larger, faster schooners built for the Biloxi fisheries during World War I. The two-masted 42-foot vessel was purchased in 1895 by Mrs. Bidwell, later given to John McDonald, and years later, was lost at sea on October 16, 1923, during a storm.

John T. McDonald had been a city alderman in 1888, and served as mayor for three 2-year terms from 1890 to 1895, and served another term in 1903.

Another famous town official was Bidwell Adam who derived his name from the Bidwells. Following his stint as a Pass alderman, he was elected and served as Mississippi's Lieutenant Governor during the Bilbo administration.

(To be continued --
Next issue will cover ***Dr. George K. Pratt*** *and wife, Mary Louise Moore Pratt)*

Pass Christian Lighthouse Society
Membership List

Lighthouse Masters
Fillette, Green Shipping Service
W. Dayton Robinson
Mary Catherine H. Ward

Lighthouse Keepers
Mr. & Mrs. Adair L Pendrick
Robert N. Pundsak

Lighthouse Tenders
Diboll Scale Models
Jerry & Mary Jane Fitzpatrick
Michael & Frankie McDonald
Mary Ziegler Norris
Abner K. Northrop, Jr.
Michael S. Rafferty
L. Dorothy Row

Members – $50.00
Adele Bielenberg
William. & Cecile Clement
James & Loraine Cuevas
Dan Ellis
Carlos Fernandez
Julia B. Frye
Mary & C .Ray Gallagher, Jr.
Irene Hanson Hodges
Herbert & Dorothy Horst
Edward J. Jurkowski
Jean E. Kern
Munro Petroleum Corporation
Shannon Pickich, Jr.
F. Herman & Yvette Rolufs
D.H. Short
Alvin J. Summy
J. Herbert & Noel Williams
Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Ward
Dr. & Mrs. James O. Williams

Membership Categories

Masters	– $1000 upward
Inspectors	– $500 upward
Keepers	– $250 upward
Tenders	– $100 upward
Memberships	– $50

Founding Member Enrollments

are being taken now. Anyone wishing to donate $100, or more, and receive a tax credit should make their check payable to the **Rotary Trust Fund,** *care of Lighthouse*. Such payments also includes membership in the Lighthouse Society.

Also: Checks, *or Pledges*, of $50 are being taken now to be a **Founding Member** of the ***Pass Christian Lighthouse Society.*** The new charter will go into effect starting January 2000.

Founding Members will have their names listed as **Founding Charter Members** with the Secretary of State Office.

To: Tricentennial Committee/Lighthouse

I, We, pledge $_____(Min $50)
Name:_____
Address:_____
City, St, ZIP: _____
Mail to: POBox 354, PCMS,39571

Who will be the Torchbearer?

Founding Membership Privileges

1. Listing with the Secretary of State as Founding Charter Members.
2. Receive Lighthouse Society Quarterly Bulletin.
3. Participate in Lottery Draw to be the ***"Official Lighthouse Torchbearer"*** to turn on the Tower Light at the dedication ceremonies. (*With two chances for each Founding Charter Member).*

▶ Members enrolling after January 20th, will also be allowed to participate in the Lottery Draw, but with one chance only.

Who will be the Torchbearer?

Missed Opportunity!

Writers of History of the Pass, including this writer, have erroneously reported that Pass Christian was incorporated in 1838. Reading through the old Minutes Books at City Hall is more than tedious due to early handwriting scripts. For a number of the first administrations, the Mayor, who was actually called the *"Recorder,"* was the person who recorded the meeting minutes into the official Town records.

In 1890, there was a contest between the Town and the Railroad company over drainage and the grading of roads crossing the tracks. Citizens near Pine Street at the West End complained about the need of reducing the incline crossing of Pine Street over the tracks. The Railroad officials refused to fill in and level the grade stating that Pine Street was not in existence at the time of the laying of the tracks.

City officials produced and recorded in the May 6th Minutes a portion of the Town's incorporation as follows: *"The Town of Pass Christian was incorporated by an Act approved February 21st 1848; the North boundary line being the half mile Section line. Pine Street, from the Front to the Northern was dedicated to the Town of Pass Christian by the Hon. John Henderson in 1852 . . . and it has always been known as a public street as affidavits of our oldest inhabitants will testify."*

A number of the Coast cities have incorrectly reported their dates of incorporation throughout the years. In the case of Bay St. Louis, in the middle of the City's Centennial Anniversary celebrations in 1958, they realized that it was an incorrect date since a document was uncovered revealing that Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, and Biloxi were incorporated in 1838. However, even after that, another document was found showing an 1818 incorporation for Bay St. Louis. The problem is that even though a State Act of Incorporation is filed, if the Town or Village did not comply with certain conditions, they were not officially incorporated. Also, each time a town undergoes a change in status, such as extending Corporate boundaries, or population counts converting a town to a City, requires a new Act of Incorporation.

Needless to say, Pass Christian missed a wonderful opportunity to celebrate its (150 years) *"Sesquicentennial,"* in 1998.

St. Paul's Church celebrated theirs in 1997, and Trinity Episcopal Church has celebrated theirs during this year of 1999.

To The American Flag

(This is another poem found in the Union Quarters while renovations are taking place. It was written by Bailey Vinson sometime between 1865 and 1890.)

When freedom from her mountain height
Unfurled her standard to the air
She wore the aging robe of night
And the stars of glory there

She mingled with its gorgeous dyes
The milky baldric of the skies
And striped its pure celestial white
With streakings from the morning light

Then from his mansion in the sun
She called her eagle bearer down
And gave it to his mighty hand
The symbol of her chosen land

Flag of the Brave! Thy folds shall Fly!
The sign of hope and triumph high
When speaks the signal trumpet's tone
And the long line comes gleaming on

Ere yet the life-blood warm and wet
Has dimmed the glistening bayonet
Each soldier's eye shall brightly turn
To where thy meteor glories burn

And as his springing steps advance
Catching a vengeance from the glance
And with the cannon's mouthings loud
Heaving wild wreaths the battle-shroud

And gory sabers rise and fall
Like shoots of flame on midnight's pall
There shall thy victor glances glow
Each gallant aim that strikes below

Flag of the Seas! On Oceans Wave
Thy stars shall glitter o'er the brave
When death careening on the gale
Sweeps darkly round the swelling sail

And righted waves rush widely back
Before the broadside's reeling rack
Each dying wanderer of the sea
Shall look at once to heaven and thee.

SS Pass Christian

Most folks are unaware that there was an official naval sea craft ordained to protect the Americas named the SS Pass Christian. In fact, it was the very last Victory ship launched on the East Coast. Victory ships were well known for their speed and maneuverability. Heralding the World War II assembly production line process was the July 27, 1945 announcement of the ship's keel completion within just 46 working days.

When the ship was retired, the builders plate was removed and presented to the City on April 28, 1971. The plate, in the form of a plaque, is mounted in the hallway at City Hall.

PASS CHRISTIAN VICTORY
BUILT FOR
U.S. MARITIME COMMISSION
HULL NO. V-856
BY
BETHLEHEM-FAIRFIELD SHIPYARD
INC.
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

At the beginning of World War II, the Merchant Marines had commandeered the vacant *Inn by the Sea* hotel at Henderson Point. The Baptist Assembly Complex is now located at that site.

In honor of the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet School of Pass Christian, launching ceremonies were held in Baltimore, Maryland at the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard. Wives of the Commandants of Pass Christian and New Orleans officiated in the launching.

Boys and Girls Club

A SongFest was Held

The Pass Christian Unit of the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast gave their first public social fund-raiser. It was well attended as more than ten different choral and gospel groups sang out to the spirited audience that eagerly responded with clapping and cheers.

Anyone interested in joining or sending contributions may attend open meetings held on the second Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Pass Christian Middle School Library located just north of the railroad, at 315 Clark Avenue, or call 868-6556.

Creating a "positive place for kids," is what its all about. The Boys and Girls Club of Pass Christian will have its opening at the "former" Middle School in January 2000. There is an ongoing need for support volunteers for the youngsters as well as funds to purchase equipment.

The Club will be available to kids on weekends and week-nights.

Historic Marker

(Continued from page one)

"After Nicholas Christian Ladner arrived at Cat Island in 1745, the channel was referred to as Pass Christian and eventually this peninsula was also called *Pass Christian.*

"Pass Christian changed flags a number of times -- from the French, to the English, to the Spanish, and temporary independence with the Lone Star Flag.

"Then, in 1811, the Americans sent Dr. Flood, aboard the *Alligator,* to plant the American Flag here. It was not long after, that in these waters -- Lt. "TAC" Jones performed a brilliant action by delaying the British long enough for Andrew Jackson to prepare for the Battle of New Orleans.

"By 1831, our town had the first major hotel along the coast and the first lighthouse on the Mississippi's mainland – beaconing to the world -- that we were the Queen City of the Gulf Coast.

"In 1849, at that same hotel, Southern Yachting was born here in Pass Christian with the formation of the Southern Regatta Club.

"A second naval action took place during the Civil War when on April 4, 1862, Federal ships were engaged for a 3-hour exchange of fire with Rebel gunboats. Suffering heavy damages, the Confederate gunboats made their escape and Federal troops fired their cannons on the town – and then landed at mid-day after Jane Murphy Manders waved her bed sheet as a sign of surrender.

"When the Yankee troops found no resistance here, they left, taking with them the Pass Christian Regimental flag, a copy of which you see here. The draping was removed from the marker which can now be viewed on the seawall at the Harbor.

This is the first of a series of Historic Markers which shall be placed by the Tricentennial Committee during the year 2000.

As each new marker is brought in, we look forward to seeing you help participate in the heritage preservation activity for which each marker represents.

Editorial Department

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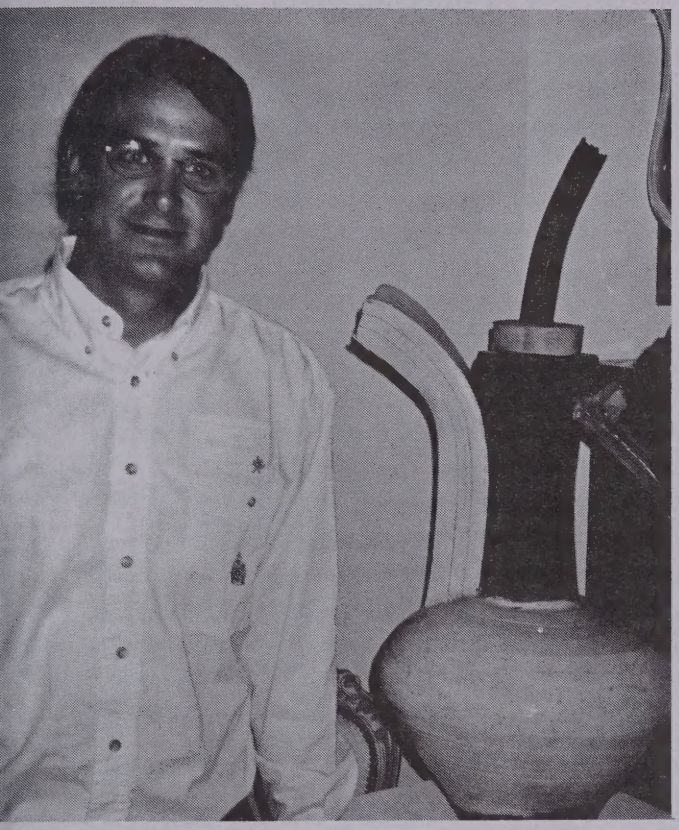
Reaching Out --



Local Potterer Brian Nettles not only pursues his course of talents, but is applauded for his projects. The vase shown in the picture alongside him has won a number of First Place Awards – five and growing.

In another case he was called on by John Currie to put a cap on the chimney at Woodland Cottage, one of the homes listed on the National Register. Currie demanded perfection in his restoration project and first sought out the company in Alabama that made the original. No Luck! His quest led him to Nettles at Davis Street who solved the problem by climbing the roof and replicating a terra cotta chimney cap from its twin.

Nettles was even called on to build a special potter's kiln for the George Ohr Center.

Reflections:

Following the Civil War, excerpts from letters printed in the New Orleans Times-Democrat described the sentiments of the people who visited the "Pass" during its resurgence of activity.

- "Its groves of oaks and magnolias and its surrounding forests of pine are covered with perennial verdure. Their evergreen foliage produces the impression that one is in the midst of a region of perpetual summer; and this impression is not far wrong as the climate is so mild that roses and violets bloom through the short winter."
- "In the drive along the sea . . . the tourist sees a long succession of luxurious residences in park-like grounds; extensive boarding-houses with rustic benches scattered along the flower-bordered and shrubbery-shaded walks; and hundreds of pretty cottages with hammocks swinging lazily."
- "The numerous fishing and promenade piers, pagoda-ornamented and projecting into the Sound are used for fishing or moonlight flirting, according to the bait used. The waters are more frequented by Spanish mackerel, the famous pompano, the shoal loving flounder . . . frequently speared by pleasure parties."
- "The shapely hulls of vessels lying at anchorage . . . show that boating and yachting are among the liberally patronized amusements here."
- "Sailing excursions out to the islands and around through the Bay are the most popular amusements. One of the favorite excursion points is a great shell mound on the banks of the Wolf River."
- "Immediately in front of Pass Christian is one of the largest oyster beds in this portion of the Gulf. A fleet of 40 or 50 is busy collecting these inexhaustible stores of seafood."
- "The sea-shooting on the nearest islands is fine, ducks, geese, curlew and snipe being found in abundance. Quail shooting is fair. Splendid deer and turkey shooting is enjoyed by camping parties."
- "It could be hardly otherwise here, where the soil may laugh up its harvests of luscious fruits and delicious vegetables to the tickling of the hoe, and the sea gives up its miraculous Galilean profusion of fishes."

PASS CHRISTIAN, MS
The Tricentennial

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Pass Christian, MS 39571

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PASS CHRISTIAN
Town and Pass (channel) named for Christian L'Adnier. Pass Christian was an early trading center and a noted antebellum resort. The South's first yacht club was established
action during the